

Militant group planned to attack US sailors, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday a local group linked to the Taliban conspired to attack American sailors who arrived in Malaysia, but the plans fell through.

Mahathir said in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corp that members of the group studied in Pakistan and travelled to Afghanistan, where they became involved with the ruling Taliban militia what he called "the Osama bin Laden group."

They were indoctrinated there, and they came home planning to overthrow the Government by force of arms," Mahathir said.

Mahathir did not identify the group. But over the past three months, Malaysian authorities have detained at least 16 men accused of being part of a local militant group allegedly planning to turn this mostly Muslim country into a hardline Islamic state.

"The (group) that was involved with Osama, they did plan to attack some American

sailors who were here after their ship docked in the harbour," Mahathir said.

"But the attack didn't come off, but we warned the Americans about that."

Mahathir did not say when the attack was supposed to have taken place or how far the planning had gone, or whether those arrested were suspected of involvement.

The Malaysian Government has said it opposes terrorism and has condemned the terror attacks in New York and Washington. — AP